

Corridor Working Group Meeting – Meeting Summary

January 17, 2006

1:30 – 3:30 p.m.

WSDOT Kent Maintenance Center
26620 68th Avenue South, Kent 98032**Attendees:****WSDOT**Chad Brown
Carol Hunter
Ron Landon
Thomas Noyes
Mike Sallis
Craig Stone
Stephanie Weber
Joy Carpine**City of Kent**Chad Bieren
Tim LaPorte
Cathy Mooney
Steve Mullen**City of Sumner**

Bill Shoemaker

City of Renton

Peter Hahn

Pierce County

Cindy Larkin

King CountyAnn Martin
Lisa Shafer**City of Auburn**Dennis Dowdy
Roger Thordarson**Perteet**Michael Booth
Loren Sand**Carter Burgess**Greg Henk
Jared Moore**Envirolssues**

Kristine dos Remedios

Welcome and Introductions*Carol Hunter, WSDOT*

Carol Hunter, WSDOT, welcomed the group and thanked them for coming. All attendees introduced themselves and the agency they represent. Carol reviewed the agenda and started the meeting. The objective of the meeting was to provide the partners information about the HOT Lanes concept of operations, pricing report and results of the focus groups. An update on the State 4/5 HOV Environmental Assessment, Corridor Plan truckers survey, and the upcoming public involvement schedule would also be provided.

Approve November 15th Meeting Summary*Carol Hunter, WSDOT*

Copies of the November 15th meeting summary were sent to the partners prior to the meeting via email and in hard copy at the meeting. Carol asked for any comments or revisions to the summary. There were none. The summary was considered approved and will be posted on the project websites.

HOT Lanes Pilot Project

Carol Hunter, WSDOT and Greg Henk, Carter Burgess

A significant amount of information regarding the HOT Lanes Pilot Project concept of operations and pricing is now available from the team. Greg Henk and Jared Moore from Carter Burgess provided a number of diagrams to show the HOT Lanes access areas, access design alternatives, striping, signage, and lane widths.

On the access and egress diagram, a range is shown for each area along SR 167 where a HOT lanes access point can be located. By providing a range for each access location, the final design-build process is more flexible. During the next phase, cost and design can be taken into account in order to determine the actual access location within the specified access range.

Figure 2 shows the midpoint access design alternatives for the HOT lanes. The team found that there is not enough pavement in some areas of SR 167 with enough structural value to implement options 2 and 3. Therefore, option 1 is considered the preferred midpoint access alternative. In this option there would be a 2-foot minimum buffer area between the general purpose and HOT lane. Carol Hunter, WSDOT, noted that the Minnesota Department of Transportation (MnDOT) uses a similar design as option 1 for their HOT lanes access and egress points.

Figure 3 shows the buffer and striping design for option 1. There will be a 2-foot buffer, which consists of two 8-inch strips with an 8-inch gap between them.

Figure 4 shows the signage that will warn drivers of an upcoming HOT lane access point and the toll price. There will be some advance signage that also advises drivers to exit the HOT lane for the next upcoming freeway exit. Approximately 100-feet before the HOT lanes access area, a rate sign with the current toll price is posted. For the next 1500-feet, drivers can then cross the skip-striping to enter or exit the HOT lane. Approximately 500-feet after the double white line begins again, the transponder reader will sense for a valid transponder in single occupancy vehicles.

Figure 6 shows the signing designed for the beginning of the HOT lane, rather than a midpoint access location.

Figure 7 shows the anticipated lane widths of the shoulder, HOT lane and remaining general-purpose lane. The right most general-purpose lane will remain a 12-foot wide lane to accommodate for trucks.

Greg then went over the traffic and revenue report. Figure 6 of the report was explained. This figure shows traffic volumes by SOV, HOV or total vehicles in relation to the anticipated toll rate for the HOT lanes. The capacity of the HOT lane is 1500 vehicles per hour. The minimum toll in the SR 167 HOT lane will be

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\$.50 and toll rates will increase based on the actual traffic volumes on SR 167. To maximize capacity in the HOT lane, tolls need to be set at about \$1.75 in the southbound lane in the afternoon and set at about \$.75 in the northbound lane in the morning. The HOT lane toll will not be set to optimize revenue but to optimize flow within the HOT lane. The HOT lane will only operate from 5 a.m. to 7 p.m., which follows the current restricted hours of the existing HOV lanes.

The team also provided a brief update on the HOT lanes focus groups conducted on December 10th and January 14th. In general, there was more support for the project from the low-income groups than from the typical commuter. In the low-income group there were three women who were self-employed. They recognized the benefit of paying a toll in order to schedule additional jobs in one day, increasing their overall income. All focus group participants had a hard time understanding the concepts of variable pricing and the use of tolls to manage traffic. WSDOT staff learned that a strong educational program would be crucial for the successful operation of the HOT lane.

Discussion Topics:

- Tim LaPorte, City of Kent, asked if any widening was anticipated for the project. Greg said that no widening is anticipated, except for areas where additional signage needs to be added. The new HOV lanes will require some widening and they will be built to HOT lanes standards. The Stage 4/5 Environmental Assessment work will assume that the lanes are managed.
- Ann Martin, King County, asked that the diagrams be revised show that the 2000 feet from each interchange is a minimum, not an absolute number.
- Dennis Dowdy, City of Auburn, asked if enforcement would be done by photo images or by law enforcement. Carol said that the state patrol would enforce the HOT lane. Photo enforcement will not be used at this point but the HOT lanes will be designed so to not preclude the use of photo enforcement in the future.
- Lisa Shafer, King County, asked if the transponder reader goes off when there is a valid transponder or a violating driver. The team said that the light goes off if the reader was able to sense a valid transponder.
- Ann Martin noted that there was not much time, after a driver sees the toll, to get into the HOT lane. Greg noted that because the toll is dynamic, it is important to make sure that people are actually charged the toll they see on the sign. If the toll price sign is located too far in advance, the toll may change before the driver enters the HOT lane.
- Thomas Noyes, WSDOT, asked what toll a driver would be charged if they already entered the HOT lane but the toll goes up while they are in the HOT lane. Greg said that the driver would be charged the toll that they see when they first enter the HOT lane, regardless if the toll goes up while they are in the HOT lane.
- Mike Sallis asked if drivers are paid different tolls depending on how long they are in the HOT lane. Carol Hunter said that it does not matter how long

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you travel in the HOT lane. The toll is charged when you get in the HOT lane. The system then can sense whether or not the driver is a new car in the HOT lane or a car that had been charged at a previous access point.

- Ron Landon, WSDOT, asked if high occupancy vehicles (HOVs) are required to use the same access points as single occupancy vehicles (SOVs). The team said that yes, HOVs will have to use the designated access points marked by the skip-striping. It is illegal for any driver to cross the double white lines.
- Steve Mullen asked if there is a need to change state law to make it clear that it is illegal to cross the double white lines. Carol said that the law currently states that it is illegal to cross the double white lines. Double white lines are not used very frequently but they are used on ferry docks, for example. Education along the corridor will be crucial to make sure the public knows it is illegal to cross the double white lines. Members of the Washington State Patrol did travel to Minnesota with the WSDOT team to observe enforcement issues along their HOT lanes. They observed that drivers learned quickly that they could not cross the double white lines and there were very few violations.
- Ann Martin asked if it was illegal to cross a single solid white line. The team said that a single solid white line is meant as guidance only.
- Tim LaPorte asked how often the toll is adjusted during the day. Greg Henk said the toll rate is calculated every 4-6 or 4-8 minutes. The toll rate may change that often but if a change is not warranted based on congestion levels, the toll will stay the change. Toll rates will only change by \$.25 increments.
- Ann Martin asked why the preferred toll rate is off of what appears to be the maximized capacity for the HOT lane going northbound in the morning. Greg Henk acknowledge this and said that he was also going to ask the Wilbur Smith team about this.
- Cathy Mooney, City of Kent, asked if the toll rate is reassessed based on congestion every 4-6 minutes, where would the congestion be measured. Greg said that the toll will be the same for the entire length of the HOT lane and it will be based on system wide congestion levels. Similar to ramp metering, which is triggered when the entire system, not just one interchange, is congested.
- Ann Martin asked if there was any information about how HOT lanes encourage drivers to form carpools. This would increase the number of HOVs on the road that use the HOT lane for free, which may cause an increase in the toll rates.
- Dennis Dowdy suggested that traffic counts along parallel routes to SR 167 (Auburn Way – Central, and West Valley Highway) be conducted in order to get up to date data to compare the data collected after the pilot project is implemented, in order to measure its success. We want to know if the toll is causing less or more traffic to take alternate routes as a part of the tolling evaluation. Where cities do not have good and recent pre-project counts, the project should obtain them.

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- Ann Martin suggested that the WSDOT website have a link to real time pricing on the HOT lane, so drivers can have up to date information on traffic and toll rates before they decide on their route. Greg said this was a good idea and at minimum, historical toll rates for different times of the day can be posted.

Stage 4/5 HOV Environmental Assessment

Mike Sallis, WSDOT and Michael Booth, Perteet

Michael Booth said a kick-off meeting for the State 4/5 Environmental Assessment (EA) project is scheduled for February 2nd. Shortly after the kickoff meeting the team will begin collecting the necessary information to develop the technical memos and discipline reports required for the EA. The team will be contacting the partners within the next couple of months to gather environmental resource and lane use information. A folio for the project will be developed by WSDOT communications staff and should be available by the end of February. The team is currently finalizing the project work plan, project description and purpose and need statement.

Carol noted that the Transportation Partnership Account dedicates \$80 million to the Stage 4/5 HOV extension. The exact project definition has not been finalized yet but the EA will assume that the new HOV lanes will be managed lanes. The Stage 5 HOV extension will not likely be built at the same time as the Stage 4 HOV extension, but the environmental work is being conducted for both construction projects at the same time.

Discussion:

- None

Corridor Plan Truckers Survey

Loren Sand, Perteet

The truckers survey was sent out in mid-December 2005 to over 450 trucking companies and freight operators in the SR 167 corridor. About 50 surveys were returned. The team is making phone calls to a select sample of unresponsive companies and operators to try and get the number of returned surveys up to 100 or 150. The results of the survey will be compiled within the next couple of weeks.

Discussion:

- Bill Shoemaker, City of Sumner, asked for a copy of the survey.
- Cathy Mooney asked if there was a good mix of the type of companies who responded to the survey or were the responses from mostly “mom and pop” or larger firms. Loren said that there was a good mix of responses.

Public Involvement Schedule

Carol Hunter, WSDOT and Kristine dos Remedios, EnviroIssues

Carol Hunter reminded the partners that open houses would be held for the SR 167 Corridor Plan, HOT Lanes Pilot and Stage 4/5 HOV Extension projects in mid-February. Kristine dos Remedios shared the date, time and location for the open houses which is as follows:

Wednesday, February 15th, 2006
6:00 – 8:00 pm
Sumner Middle School, Cafeteria
1508 Willow St.
Sumner, WA 98390

Thursday, February 16th, 2006
6:00 – 8:00 pm
Kent Senior Center
600 E Smith St.
Kent, WA 98030

Kristine also had copies of the posters and postcards being used to advertise the open house events for the partners to take and place in public locations. The project team would also be out along the SR 167 corridor distributing the posters and postcards at community centers, libraries, and service centers as well as targeted locations to reach environmental justice populations. An email will also be sent out to members of the public who have expressed an interest in the project and each person who attended previous SR 167 outreach events will receive a postcard by mail.

Discussion:

- Ann Martin asked if specific groups, such as environmental associations, agricultural groups, and cultural organizations would be sent a postcard.

Next Meeting: 2/21/06, 1:30 – 3:30 p.m.
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